



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 22.2.2017  
C(2017) 1276 final

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the standardisation package, which was adopted on 1 June 2016, together with the Communication from the Commission on "European standards for the 21st century" {COM(2016) 358 final}.*

*In this Communication, the Commission sets out its vision for a single and efficient European standardisation system that adapts to the changing environment, supports multiple policies and brings benefits to companies, consumers and workers. The Joint Initiative on Standardisation is a key part of the standardisation package. It is accompanied by documents exploring different facets of European standardisation such as an evaluation report, the Annual Union Work Programme for standardisation and a document on standards for services.*

*In this framework and against the background of the fast evolving technologies in an ever increasing globalised economy, the Commission sees indeed a need to devote a high priority to the timely development of standards and to further encourage all efforts undertaken by stakeholders under the full respect of inclusiveness and quality of the standard. As a concrete measure, in the framework of the three cluster domains which have been identified for improving the European standardisation system, a specific action dealing with the "provision of high-quality standards delivered and referenced in a timely manner" was selected. The respective working group has taken up its activities in September 2016. The progress of its work is being reported and discussed within the Joint Initiative's Steering Group on a three-monthly basis.*

*Regarding the specific concern that the development of European service standards could result in overregulation or undermine the existing standards in Austria, it is necessary to point out the Commission's Communication is about voluntary service standards. They are drawn up by private bodies, mostly standards developing organisations, and in no way legally binding unless they are declared mandatory by a legal act issued by a competent public authority.*

*Ms Sonja LEDL-ROSSMANN  
President of the Bundesrat  
Dr Karl Renner-Ring 3  
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*The Commission's competence is limited to ensuring that European standards are developed in line with the principles of the European Standardisation Regulation<sup>1</sup>. Clearly, to be applicable in practice, European standards cannot contradict legislation or aim to replace it where it exists.*

*Moreover, as set out in the Staff Working Document "Tapping the potential of European service standards to help Europe's consumers and businesses<sup>2</sup>", the Commission underlines the need for standards to be market driven. Stakeholders can decide whether a standard in their area of activity is useful and whether to engage in its development. An important number of service standards have been developed inter alia by the Austrian standardisation body, proving interest among Austrian stakeholders.*

*It is important to highlight that in general during the development of any future standards, the private standard developing organisations shall also take into account the harmonised requirements of the Professional Qualifications Directive<sup>3</sup> regarding certain professions and regarding the general principles of proportionality.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Frans Timmermans  
First Vice-President*

*Elżbieta Bienkowska  
Member of the Commission*

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on European standardisation, amending Council Directives 89/686/EEC and 93/15/EEC and Directives 94/9/EC, 94/25/EC, 95/16/EC, 97/23/EC, 98/34/EC, 2004/22/EC, 2007/23/EC, 2009/23/EC and 2009/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Decision 87/95/EEC and Decision No 1673/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 316, 14.11.2012, p. 12–33.

<sup>2</sup> SWD(2016)186 final.

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22–142.